

Subcinema: Theorizing Marginal Film Distribution

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Between the multiplex and the art house lays a terrain of global film culture, which is inadequately accounted for in much contemporary film theory. Piracy operations, diasporic networks, cult markets, popular video industries – circuits such as these operate outside and alongside conventional channels of film distribution. Profit-oriented, non-resistant and largely informal, they deliver vast amounts of media to audiences every day. But how are we to study them? This article seeks to trace the outlines of a theoretical approach to film distribution, a field of study which Sean Cubitt has recently described as being only ‘in its infancy’. A model of ‘subcinema’ is proposed here as a new way of conceptualising those forms of subterranean audiovisual exchange which do not show up on other maps.

Introduction: For a Materialist Cinema Studies

Fetishism comes in many shapes and sizes, and has long been a favoured object of analysis for media, literary and cultural theorists. However, it has also become something of a methodological pathology within film theory itself. By fetishising the textual issues of representation, meaning and aesthetics, certain strands of cinema studies have lost sight of more important issues.¹ In what follows, I outline an alternative direction for film theory, one which is less concerned with the content of individual films than with the routes they take through time and space, and the traces they leave along the way. In so doing, I seek to offer some preliminary reflections on what a materialist approach to media distribution might look like, and why it might be worth taking seriously as a future direction, not only for film studies but also for cultural studies more broadly.

Film theory’s most familiar and comfortable ground has always been the text. We are, have always been, expert ‘readers’ – we have enjoyed deconstructing texts, lovingly decoding their meanings and allusions. This genre of criticism often has a familiar ring to it, and frequently concludes with the writer positioning the text in question somewhere along a spectrum of regressive-to-progressive or derivative-to-innovative. It is generally less concerned with what happens ‘upstream’ – the industrial machinations that determine who gets to see which films, under what circumstances, and where.

This inclination towards textual analysis is a result of a number of factors. The legacy of literary studies is a significant one. So too is the emphasis on issues of identity and representation that came hand-in-hand with what has been termed the ‘new cultural politics of difference’², an important moment for cultural and media studies. However, there are darker forces at work here as well. The realities of the higher education market play their part: the need to make film studies appealing and accessible for undergraduate cohorts is pressing, as is the ‘publish-or-perish’ climate in which film scholars usually work, which renders textual analysis a more attractive alternative than time-consuming empirical, archival or ethnographic research.

Such pressures are understandable. But they do not let film studies off the hook completely. While I do not seek to question the analytical potential of such work or the profound contribution that studies of representation have made within and beyond the academy, I would like to suggest that textual analysis should be only one weapon in the well-stocked arsenal of film scholarship. It is not where cinema studies should begin and end. While Australian media studies has always been a heterogeneous and frequently innovative field, it remains the case that formalism is still the default position for many scholars, institutions, journals and conference chairs. When it comes to studies of distribution and circulation, however, there is no comparable analytical template at hand.

This is the gap, which the present essay seeks to fill, or to at least gesture towards. As such, my concerns are primarily methodological and my approach somewhat speculative. Taking my lead from Sean Cubitt's recent work in this area³, I seek to further theorize film distribution as the movement of media through time and space (a definition which at times necessarily encompasses film exhibition). Towards the end of the essay, I will also introduce what I have termed *subcinema* and discuss the implications such circuits have for the way we conceptualise film as both an economic and ideological apparatus. As I will suggest, tracking the movements of media through spaces, cultures and markets is a task that should not be left to consumer profilers and industry analysts alone. The circuits through which texts move are of paramount importance to the processes of reception so rigorously theorized by a generation of film scholars, and each can tell us something new about the social, cultural, and economic functions of cinema in the twenty-first century.

Distribution in Theory

Before we go further, I'd like to briefly survey some of the existing approaches to film distribution that exist across the spectrum of the humanities. This list is an indicative sample rather than an exhaustive review – there are many studies that I have not had space to discuss here, and others still which I have yet to discover. Film distribution is a difficult thing to research, and what knowledge exists on the topic is often closely guarded for commercial reasons. It is also the least theorized end of the film industry, which means that researchers often find themselves bogged down in the minutiae of box office figures or sales agreements without the theoretical tools which might help them make sense of this unfamiliar terrain. Thus, the purpose of this preliminary survey is to identify certain commonalities that exist in disciplines, which rarely speak to one another, and hopefully also to offer some starting points for other researchers working in this field.

A sizeable body of literature on film distribution exists within the spheres of economics and marketing, though this rarely has any critical component. Trade papers such as *Variety*, *Screen Digest* and *Screen Daily* provide vital information on box office openings and international distribution deals, filtered through layers of hype and misinformation. Handbooks to media economics and entertainment industry accounting⁴ provide other pieces of the puzzle, though these tend to date rapidly. Ethnographic interviews with industry workers are another alternative, though many distributors are unwilling to discuss their line of work with academics. Making sense of this material is not always easy for scholars who have been reared in the hermeneutic tradition of textual analysis (myself included), yet it is essential if we are to understand how films get to audiences – or, as is more often the case, how they do not.

The counterpoint to this discourse on distribution comes in the form of critical political economy. Sharing a concern with the expansionary logic of capital and issues of labour, class, concentration of ownership, and (to a lesser degree) resistance within the media industries, political economists such as Janet Wasko, Toby Miller, Vincent Mosco and Ronald Bettig have produced rigorous analyses of the supply side of the entertainment business.⁵ American domination of international screen markets is a recurring theme, as is collusion between nation-states and corporations. However, what is generally absent from this Marxist discipline is an engagement with audiences. This valuable body of work tells us much about regulation and production but less about film consumption – what people *do* with films, how cinema interfaces with the everyday.

A third dimension to the study of distribution, one which frequently overlaps with the political economy tradition, comes via the work of film historians such as Thomas Guback, Robert Allen and Douglas Gomery.⁶ Their important archival research has alerted us to the predatory practices of the majors and their state-supported export agenda. Regulation, distribution and production are interlinked through rigorous case studies of particular studios, directors or producers. This kind of work has a strong materialist orientation but it is somewhat limited in scope, being almost exclusively concerned with the Hollywood studio system or with early cinema in the US. There is very little available on more recent issues relating to distribution, and few attempts have been made to theorize distribution itself in any meaningful way.

The final dimension to distribution studies that I will outline here comes from media anthropology, a field which all too rarely crosses paths with cinema studies. Of particular interest is the work of two anthropologists, Jeffrey Himpele and Brian Larkin, though it must be noted that there is other excellent work in this area, some of which overlaps with the ethnographic arm of cultural studies.⁷ Their illuminating studies of media distribution, in Bolivia and Nigeria respectively, combine extensive fieldwork with sophisticated theorization. Media anthropology's focus on ground-level practices of media consumption, usually beyond or on the fringes of the West, provides a missing piece of the puzzle, illustrating the variability of conditions of exhibition and the ways in which each viewing scenario brings with it a specific affective context contingent upon gender, class, age, and other variables.

If we are to take distribution seriously as an object of scholarly enquiry, we need to engage with all four of these traditions, synthesising them in creative ways and possibly combining them with yet other analytical models. Allen Scott's economic geography, Ravi Sundaram's work on Indian new media circuits and Shujen Wang's study of the Greater Chinese film market all spring to mind.⁸ This new approach to distribution could potentially constitute a critical intervention in these debates from within cinema studies, taking advantage of our most valuable asset – namely, the arsenal of textual and reception theory that we have at our disposal. In this sense, such an approach would be both theoretically informed and empirically grounded, and could take the following principles as its points of departure.

(1) *Distribution means dollars*

Distribution is the most profitable segment of the film industry. Vast sums of money flow through distributors, and a large portion of these sums is retained in the form of fees, interest charges and profits. Given the distribution business is marked by high levels of ownership concentration and vertical integration, this is something to take seriously.⁹ Consider the economics of a typical Hollywood blockbuster – say, the 2000 action thriller *Gone in 60 Seconds*.¹⁰ Its spreadsheets tell an interesting story. Of the \$198 million earned in home video revenues (the film's most profitable exhibition outlet by far), only \$18.4 million made its way back to the producers, to be divvied up between a variety of profit participants. The rest, minus costs, went to the distributor Buena Vista, with a \$12.6 million distribution fee going to Buena Vista's parent company Disney.

As this example demonstrates, distributors tend to take the lion's share of a film's revenues. In the name of global playability, they also shape films textually – their preferences frequently result in changes to scripts, casting and marketing plans. These behind-the-scenes middle men, whom we know so little about, regulate the flows of money and meaning that constitute contemporary film culture.¹¹

(2) *Distribution frames reception*

The kinds of textual encounters with which film studies is largely concerned rely on distributive networks to connect audiences with media. Distribution determines who gets to watch films, under what circumstances, and why.

In his study of Iranian cinema's presence within the international film festival circuit, Bill Nichols has mapped some of the ways in which this specific mode of distribution invites a predetermined spectatorial response. For Nichols, the film festival experience is characterised by a play of similarity

and difference: the familiarity offered by certain formal qualities is overlaid with the frisson of textual discovery, reframing and commodifying Western audiences' encounter with the cinematic Other:

The recovery of strangeness by means of an induction into an international art cinema/film festival aesthetic clearly does not so much uncover a pre-existing meaning as layer on a meaning that did not exist prior to the circuit of exchange that festivals themselves constitute.¹²

Now imagine seeing the same Iranian films on pirated DVDs purchased from an "ethnic" grocery. Pulled off a dusty shelf, surrounded by hundreds of similar-looking titles, the text appears as *product* – as one particle in a tidal wave of unremarkable and unfamiliar media, which is probably not worth your time.

My point here is not particularly new, but it bears repeating: conditions of distribution are crucial in determining how audiences read films. Indeed, I would like to suggest that elite or cinephile audiences are even more susceptible to such semiotic realignments than other audience segments: the 'high' modes of distribution with which film scholars are familiar (i.e. museum, gallery and festival screenings) are particularly potent in their ability to situate and stabilize the textual encounter. What we watch is often less important than where and how we watch it.

(3) *Distribution inscribes cultural difference*

Further to this last point, we should also note that distribution circulates cultural capital unevenly. It has the power to fragment audiences along age, class, gender and ethnic lines, reinforcing certain differentials of power and creating new ones along the way. Himpele's groundbreaking, if somewhat under appreciated, study of filmgoing practices in Bolivia has much to teach us here. He extrapolates a class narrative from the release patterns of films, tracking their movement from flagship premieres in ritzy cinemas in central La Paz through to older, cheaper venues in the poorer areas of the city. By the time they have reached the end of their run, the prints are damaged, the movies have ceased being latest releases, and a certain class-specific power dynamic has been subtly entrenched.¹³

Of course, the situation is a little different in Australia, as the saturation releasing pattern favoured by distributors means that cinemas in Bendigo and Brisbane tend to receive films at the same time. Nonetheless, it remains the case that cultural capital accrues differently through different modes of distribution. Seeing a movie on free-to-air TV two years after its cinematic release, as opposed to being at its opening-night screening (or downloading it via the file-sharing system Bit Torrent), gives one less to talk about around the water cooler.

While cinema's attempts to erode difference – whether via the familiar transcendent-humanist narratives or cultural-imperialist hegemony – have been frequently noted, its production of difference at the point of distribution deserves greater attention. For this reason, we need to go beyond the text in our analyses – or rather, to rethink textuality as a function of distribution.

(4) *Studying distribution means thinking globally*

The final argument for the importance of distribution is a somewhat self-reflective one, and it relates to how screen studies imagines its position and function within an increasingly globalised mediascape and academic community. One dimension of this is the growing awareness that some of the foundational tenets of screen studies, and cultural studies more broadly, have been rather US/Euro-centric.¹⁴

Thus, one of the challenges that scholars face in attempting to carry out culturally sensitive forms of research is how to study cultural production and consumption across various sites without inadvertently suppressing, through the indiscriminate imposition of inappropriate methodologies, the very differences we are trying to investigate. One suggestion has been to think comparatively about the ground-level effects of institutions and activities, which cross national borders.¹⁵ In this respect, film distribution circuits are ideal objects of enquiry. They force us to think *transnationally* about cultural production and consumption. And while there are many promising developments in the area of transnational cultural studies, we shouldn't limit our research to cataloguing tendencies

within texts (border-crossing casting, settings, costumes, dialogue, and so on). Studying the circulation of cinema is a more interesting alternative, and one which may even lead to the kind of cultural policy research that can make its presence felt in industry and regulatory spheres.

Subcinema

This brings me to the topic flagged in the title of this article. Many of the examples discussed above illustrate the conventional windowing release pattern, in which films move orderly through a staggered series of exhibition outlets (cinemas, digital download, pay-per-view, home video, cable, television). Much art cinema operates on a similar pattern of distribution, the key difference being that the windows through which films move are different (festivals, art houses, boutique retailers, galleries or public broadcasters, and so on). I have alluded to some of the social implications of these modes of distribution, including their capacity to create difference at each step and their uneven circulation of cultural capital. However, there is a whole other realm of cinema culture, which falls outside these two models and exists alongside them.

I am calling these more informal modes of film consumption 'subcinema'. This term refers to feature films, which bypass the conventional releasing patterns outlined earlier. It includes such phenomena as straight-to-video releasing, telemovies, cult movie markets, diasporic media, popular video industries such as Nigeria's 'Nollywood', pornography, special interest cinema, and so on. Now obviously this encompasses a vast array of film culture, and glosses over important structural differences between formats, genres, industries and circuits, all of which I have just listed. While I will shortly attempt to identify six characteristics of subcinema, I would like to admit up-front that such a schema is doomed to failure if it claims to be exhaustive. For this reason, I would like to note here that I am employing the term as a rhetorical/theoretical model rather than as a clearly defined textual or industrial category. Subcinema is a loose way of *conceptualising* certain forms of film culture, which are incompatible with more familiar paradigms (Hollywood cinema, art cinema, national cinema, independent cinema etc.). It is not a bullet-proof taxonomic category, but rather an attempt to think seriously about kinds of film production and consumption, which don't show up on other maps.

Firstly, subcinema is *subterranean* – it circulates beneath more conventional circuits via informal, and sometimes illegal, channels. It is difficult to quantify statistically and tends to travel beneath governmental or critical radars. In this sense, the term does not really refer to texts so much as to the circuits through which they reach (or don't reach) their audiences. The kinds of textual encounters, which involve cheap bootleg videotapes, downloaded AVI files, informal video clubs and late-night cable TV schedules belong to the world of subcinema. Those that occur at film festivals, art houses, museums, multiplexes, and other institutionalised exhibition sites do not.

Secondly, subcinema is *non-cinematic* – in the sense that it is usually consumed in the home, or in social spaces beyond the cinema itself. It is not about the thrill of cinemagoing or the pleasures of cinephilia. Subcinema consumption is social rather than solitary. It often takes place in a state of distraction. Film-studies staples like 'immersion' or 'suturing' cannot be transplanted wholesale into the subcinematic realm, which is more televisual in its rhythms and texture.

Thirdly, subcinema is *non-resistant*. While avant-garde and third cinemas may carry an explicit political agenda, or at least a vague oppositional charge, subcinema seeks profit rather than progress. Subcinema travels via subterranean channels but it is not underground in any deliberate way. It takes little pleasure in its marginal status, and would happily go mainstream if market conditions allowed. Paradoxically, for this very reason it may in fact have more to teach us about equitable media distribution than those well-established alternative cultural channels such as independent documentary filmmaking and avant-garde cinema, which in their self-conscious oppositionality often end up perpetuating their marginality and entrenching that which they oppose.

Fourth, subcinema is *subordinated* critically. Practitioners of film studies rarely take it seriously. Now, sometimes these oversights are for good reason – after all, evangelical Christian videos or extreme-sports DVDs do not always make for compelling narrative or aesthetic analyses. Porn,

exploitation and cult cinema have fared better, receiving occasional scholarly attention (and a degree of critical fetishisation).¹⁶ Nonetheless, a significant gap in film theory exists when it comes to these commercial, degraded, often banal forms of film culture – and it is a gap that shouldn't necessarily be filled by “reading” these productions as texts. Rather, we should be looking more closely at the interfaces between subcinema and everyday life, theorizing subcinema in the context of consumption rather than representation.

Fifth, subcinema is *contextual*. A film may start off in ‘legitimate’ circuits and slip into a subcinema circuit in another country or some time after its release. Any film can become subcinema if it is distributed in a certain way. S.V. Srinivas, for example, has provided an illuminating account of the radical recontextualisations that occur when Hong Kong action cinema is exhibited in B-film circuits in India.¹⁷ Pirate copies of blockbuster movies, cheap DVD 10-packs sold in supermarkets, bootleg favourites like Todd Haynes’ *Superstar*¹⁸ – all this is subcinema too. These films may start off as ‘mainstream’ or ‘underground’ cinema, but at the point at which they enter a subcinema circuit they become something else. This is not to say that they become the same thing, certainly not at a textual level, but rather that their mode of distribution informs the way they are received by audiences differently from that point onwards.

Finally, subcinema is *global*. It is a phenomenon that occurs across a variety of sites simultaneously, linked by complex networks of textual and economic exchange. It is also a way of thinking transnationally about film culture, an attempt to find commonalities between geographically and culturally disparate forms of film consumption without erasing textual difference. Subcinema circuits are often disrespectful of trade agreements, intellectual property (IP) law and state censorship. Comparatively analysing the circulation patterns of Bollywood films in Melbourne, Nigerian video-films in Ghana or Stephen Seagal movies in Bangkok may tell us some interesting things about the trajectories, velocities and intensities of global media flows today. The mapping such work produces will differ substantially from our default imaginings of cultural exchange, especially those based around residual cultural-imperialist or crude public-sphere models.

To conclude, I will offer an example of a subcinema circuit and some possible ways to approach it.

Piracy as Subcinema

The pirate media industry is subcinema at its most energetic. While piracy is typically defined as the unauthorised reproduction of copyrighted material, in practice it is much more than this – a dense network of markets, textual systems and (sub)cultures, one which is underground without being resistant. Operating in the interstices between legitimate media circuits, piracy is an informal and non-legal distribution system, which represents a rupture in the orderly regimes of IP overseen by the official organs of globalisation (the World Trade Organization, World Intellectual Property Organisation). At the same time, it is an entrepreneurial activity, which is generally carried out for some kind of personal gain and without overt political intent. It has traditionally (if decreasingly) traded in ‘degraded’ versions, which tend not to meet the standards of cinephiles or film scholars.¹⁹ And in many cases, the lines between pirate media and legal media are rather tenuous, with films slipping into pirate circuits during or after their official lifespan.

All these contradictions and complications make for a fascinating object of inquiry; one, which can be approached from multiple angles simultaneously and which, in an age of YouTube and Bit Torrent, should represent an issue of considerable importance to film scholars. However, most media coverage and academic debate tends to bypass these issues in its rush to either condemn or redeem piracy on the basis of its (il)legality. The entertainment industries’ ‘war on piracy’ and the libertarian ‘let the information flow free’ ethos, exemplified respectively by the rhetoric of the Motion Picture Association of America and the Electronic Frontier Foundation, represent the two extremes of this debate. However, both are underwritten by fairly conservative politics, rooted in either intellectual-proprietary or romanticised free-speech ideologies. I’d like to suggest that it may be more productive to shift this discussion to a material foundation – to think about what piracy can do, as well as whether it’s good or bad. It is only after we have reconfigured the terms of the

discussion along these lines that we will be able to begin taking this integral part of the global mediascape seriously and to give it the scholarly attention it merits.

Consider the example of Nigeria's 'Nollywood' video industry. It is a rare phenomenon indeed – a national cinema which has been booming since the 1990s without any government support or critical attention. 'Nollywood' films do not get shown in cinemas, of which few still exist in Nigeria. Rather, it's a home-video-based industry – films are shot on video or on digital, over a period of about a week, and distributed cheaply on DVD (previously on VHS). Operating outside conventional channels of film production, distribution and exhibition, 'Nollywood' manages to produce hundreds of features per year – many times more than we do in Australia. It has become the country's most vibrant form of cultural production, not to mention a significant economic force in its own right. It has its own star system and an increasing international profile. But the keys to its success have been its low production cost base as well as its distribution networks, which, as Larkin has documented, *evolved from pre-existing pirate operations* radiating out from the city of Kano. These semi-formal networks of trade and exchange had long been responsible for circulating Indian and American movies around Nigeria and into neighbouring nations.²⁰

This is an example of the productivity of piracy – of how it not only disseminates existing content according to market demand but also opens up a space for whole new economies, new forms of cultural production, new possibilities. In this way, we might imagine the subcinematic infrastructure of piracy as an alternative distribution system rather than a nefarious criminal network. Largely oblivious to market regulation, copyright law, taxes, and so on, piracy is extremely good at moving texts from place to place with speed and efficiency. In many cases it provides the only form of media access that exists.

Alternatively, we might like to imagine piracy in macro-economic terms. A witty metaphor is offered by the film theorist Chuck Kleinhans, who has argued that piracy represents a form of 'cockroach capitalism'.²¹ Like cockroaches, pirates live in the cracks in between things. They move fast, they live off whatever scraps are available, and they're very difficult to eliminate. Seen in this light, piracy simply fills gaps in the market and caters to demand for film products when and where the legitimate industries are unable or unwilling to. It constitutes a *displacement* of global trade, channelling audio-visual revenues away from the usual suspects and towards an assortment of disc duplicators, informal retailers and criminal syndicates. At the same time, it aids global capital's future exploitation of developing markets by introducing new audiences to the 'Hollywood habit'.²² Such are the contradictions of subcinema.

There is more to say about piracy, and hopefully we will see a less polarised debate emerging over the next few years. What I hope to have demonstrated here is that these kinds of subcinema circuits are worthy of our attention. As media scholars, we are in a unique position to contribute to the debates surrounding these phenomena. However, we need to constantly remind ourselves that textual politics, whether radical or regressive, means nothing without distribution. Distribution connects texts and audiences, and it frames this encounter in all kinds of ways. By shifting the terms of our relationship with the filmic text from a form of art-historical appreciation to a more engaged form of social analysis, we will be in a much better position to collaborate with other disciplines, to have our voices heard in policy and industry circles, and to make cinema studies matter just that little bit more.

Notes

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¹For a discussion of textual fetishism, see Toby Miller et al, *Global Hollywood 2*, British Film Institute, London, 2005; and Miller's *The Well-Tempered Self: Citizenship, Culture, and the Postmodern Subject*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1998.

²Cornell West, 'The New Cultural Politics of Difference', Russell Ferguson, Martha Gevers, Trinh T. Minh-Ha and West (eds.), *Out There: Marginalization and Contemporary Cultures*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1990, pp.19-36.

³Sean Cubitt, 'Distribution and media flows', *Cultural Politics*, vol. 1, no. 2, 2005, pp.193-214.

⁴See, for example, Gillian Doyle, *Understanding Media Economics*, Sage, London, 2002; Harold L Vogel, *Entertainment Industry Economics: A Guide for Financial Analysis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004; Colin Hoskins, Stuart McFadyen and Adam Finn, *Global Television and Film: A Guide to the Economics of the Business*, Clarendon, Oxford, 1997.

⁵Janet Wasko, *How Hollywood Works*, Sage, London, 2003; Miller et al, *Global Hollywood*; Vincent Mosco, *The Political Economy of Communication*, Sage, London, 1995; Ronald V. Bettig, *Copyrighting Culture: The Political Economy of Intellectual Property*, Westview Press, Boulder, 1996.

⁶See, for example, Thomas Guback, *The International Film Industry: Western Europe and America since 1945*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1969; Guback, 'Non-market Factors in the International Distribution of American Films', *Current Research in Film: Audiences, Economics, and Law – Vol. 1*, Bruce A. Austin (ed.), Ablex, New Jersey, 1985, 111-126; Robert C Allen and Douglas Gomery, *Film History: Theory and Practice*, Knopf, New York, 1985; Robert C Allen, 'Relocating Film History: The 'Problem' of the Empirical', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2006, pp.48-88.

⁷Jeffrey Himpele, 'Film Distribution as Media: Mapping Difference in the Bolivian Cinemascope', *Visual Anthropology Review*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1996, pp.47-66; Brian Larkin, 'Degraded Images, Distorted Sounds: Nigerian Video and the Infrastructure of Piracy', *Public Culture*, vol. 16, no. 2, 2004, pp.289-314. See also Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod and Brian Larkin (eds.), *Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Terrain*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002.

⁸Allen Scott, *On Hollywood: The Place, The Industry*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2005; Shujen Wang, *Framing Piracy: Globalization and Film Distribution in Greater China*, Rowan & Littlefield, Lanham, 2003; Ravi Sundaram, 'Uncanny Networks: Pirate, Urban and New Globalisation', *Economic and Political Weekly (India)*, 3 January 2000, n.p.

⁹According to Scott's analysis of United States census figures, the "four-firm concentration ratio" for film distribution is an alarming 81.9%. And while vertical integration (combined ownership of studios and/or distributors and/or theatres) has been illegal in America since the 1948 Paramount decrees, no such legislation exists internationally; and in any case, exhibitors' dependence on a steady flow of blockbusters means that they have little bargaining power, resulting in *de facto* vertical integration. Scott, *On Hollywood*, 140.

¹⁰*Gone in 60 Seconds*, (dir. Dominic Sera, prod. Jerry Bruckheimer and Mike Stenson), USA, 2000. The revenue figures cited here are taken from Edward Jay Epstein, *The Big Picture: The New Logic of Money and Power in Hollywood*, Random House, New York, 2005, pp.119-20. The source of Epstein's figures are the revenue statements circulated to films' producers and profit participants – the most authoritative (and, needless to say, fiercely guarded) source available.

¹¹The situation is not necessarily different in the arthouse circuit. Most significant "independent" films (an increasingly problematic category) owe their success to distribution deals with the majors, whose leverage with cinema owners and economies of scale give them a powerful market advantage.

¹²Bill Nichols, 'Discovering form, inferring meaning: New cinemas and the film festival circuit', *Film Quarterly*, vol. 47, no. 3, 1994, pp.16-30.

¹³Himpele, 'Film Distribution as Media'.

¹⁴See, for example, John Nguyet Erni and Siew Keng Chua, 'Introduction', *Asian Media Studies: Politics of Subjectivities*, Erni and Chua (eds.), Blackwell, Malden, 2005; Ackbar Abbas and John Nyuget Erni (eds), *Internationalizing Cultural Studies*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2004.

¹⁵Tessa Morris-Suzuki, 'Anti-area studies', *Communal/plural*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2000, pp.9-23.

¹⁶See Mark Jancovich, *Defining Cult Movies: The Cultural Politics of Oppositional Taste*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2003; Eric Schaefer, *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!: A History of Exploitation Films, 1919-1959*, Duke University Press, Durham, 1999; Jeffrey Sconce, "'Trashing" the Academy: Taste, Excess, and an Emerging Politics of Cinematic Style', *Screen*, vol. 36, no. 4, 1995, pp.371-393.

¹⁷S.V. Srinivas, 'Hong Kong Action Film in the Indian B-Circuit', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2003, pp.40-62.

¹⁸*Superstar* (dir. Todd Haynes, unreleased), USA, 1987.

¹⁹On visual degradation, see Larkin, 'Degraded images'.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹See Darrel William Davis, 'Compact Generation: VCD Markets in Asia', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, vol. 23, no. 2, 2003, pp.165-176.

²²Miller, 'Global Hollywood 2010', presentation, Australian Film Television and Radio School, May 2006, available at <<http://csb.aftrs.edu.au/>>.